



IDENTITY CLAWS

Have you seen any of those scary adverts concerning identity theft? They show a saturnine impersonator holding a black plastic bin liner that's bulging fit to burst with all the little items that we regularly discard. The implication is that unless we shred every scrap of personal data before throwing it away, the Bogeyman will sift through our rubbish so he can steal our identity and claim our family allowance.

This is a very dodgy campaign in Zygot's opinion. It was probably dreamed up by the Guild of Paper Shredders. No self-respecting sociopath is going to loiter round your bin and risk a dose of tetanus when they can simply steal your identity using their own computer. The world is full of suckers waiting to be ripped off. You may be one of them. Anyone who still uses their mother's maiden name, their children's names or their pet's name as their password deserves to be taken to the cleaners. Anyone who can't be arsed to change their default PIN should be shown no mercy. And anyone who posts their CV online should not be at all surprised if their identity is stolen by Osama Bin McGuinness and used to do very wicked things.

Some groups of computer users are specifically targeted. For example, people searching for a new job online are often vulnerable and sometimes desperately so. But Zygot must point out that the web is crawling with fake job agencies promising pie in the sky. They ask you to answer a few personal questions and invite you to submit your CV online. Then they steal your identity. If you would never dream of writing your National Insurance number and contact details on a black plastic bag, placing your full

ZYGOTE

Zygot is a benevolent soul who has a lot of time for silver surfers and feral children – but he draws the line at advertisers that equate identity fraud with the contents of bin bags. It's all a load of rubbish

working history inside that bag and leaving it outside the Cock and Ferret, then why would you do such a crazy thing online?

HANDY CAP

Zygot has found the ideal way to deal with the tide of antisocial behaviour on our streets. There's no need to go round ripping hoods and caps off feral children or slapping anti-social behaviour orders on them. We should simply follow the example of the Chinese, who no longer send in the tanks to deal with public disorder; they use text messages instead.

Very recently, the world's largest-ever computerised mailing was sent by the Chinese police to every mobile phone in the land. It was used to head off protests when things seemed to be turning ugly. Roughly translated, the admonishing text message read: "Express patriotism with a cool head. Don't join in illegal protests. Keep out of trouble." Just to make sure, the Chinese police sent a snappy follow-up SMS to tens of millions of China Mobile users to ram home the message. It advised, "Love your

country by not breaking the law. All trouble-makers will be dealt with. We know your location."

Zygot thinks the Chinese have missed just one trick in this excellent strategy. Instead of making vague threats about being "dealt with", our police could vow to turn our young people into model citizens by using one specific sanction. We know the little darlings never leave home without their mobiles; if they get out of hand, we should send them a text message threatening to confiscate their phones. Problem solved.

BILLION AIR

Zygot wonders why the media gets so hot and bothered about inadequate kids slouching around shopping centres, yet it whistles a happy tune at the news that British white-collar business steals over one billion pounds worth of goods a year. We are talking about pirated office software. A detailed study issued by the Business Software Alliance declares that hooky software accounts for 27 per cent of everything running in the nation's shops, offices,

factories and institutions. Zygot would like to remind us of the Labour Party's election manifesto and the government's pledge to use its current presidency of the EU to stamp out software piracy and "modernise protection of intellectual property rights so they are appropriate for the digital age".

If this is truly the case, Zygot demands to see 27 per cent of company directors and office managers arrested tomorrow and prosecuted for handling stolen goods. As the problem is so universal, these 27 per cent can be selected at random, perhaps by Dale Winton, on TV. Why not? Could it possibly be that these government pledges are a load of baloney and they have no intention of going after white-collar crime? It's much easier and cheaper to deflect public attention towards hapless kids who are too young to vote.

SHINY HAPPY PEOPLE

The most law-abiding computer users in the land are the silver surfers, those of us born soon after World War Two, who still have respect for the law and civic responsibilities. The baby-boom generation accounts for the highest sector of the two million British citizens working from home. They upgrade their systems more often than any other demographic sector, and they are twice as likely to have the latest software upgrades and security patches. In other words, the oldies know what's what when it comes to getting the best out of today's technology.

Unfortunately, Zygot has to stop writing this now or he'll be late for happy hour at Camilla's (formerly The King's Head). He has to collect some very important software and it's Silver Surfer's Piracy Nite. ☞

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211: SCREEN CURSORS



Early screen cursors were primitive monochrome blobs that were difficult to control in a domestic environment



With the development of the Macintosh graphic-user-interface screen cursors started to be personalised.



These days, screen cursors can be found throughout the home. In fact, they are very common indeed.